

of our military, and I know most of the American people are as well.

Listen, thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:01 p.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; senior Al

Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; Cindy Sheehan, whose son Spc. Casey Sheehan, USA, died in Iraq on April 4, 2004; and Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. A reporter referred to Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

Interview With Israeli Television Channel 1 in Crawford, Texas August 11, 2005

Yaron Deckel. Mr. President, thank you very much for the first interview granted to Israeli TV and for hosting us in your beautiful ranch in Texas.

The President. Well, welcome. Thanks for coming. It's an honor to have you here, and it's an honor to speak on Israeli TV.

Prime Minister Sharon/Disengagement

Mr. Deckel. I understand why you like this place better than the White House.

We are on the eve of the disengagement, and you have expressed your full support in disengagement, trying to help Prime Minister Sharon in his struggle. And I would like to ask why is it so important to you, Mr. President?

The President. First of all, let me speak about my relationship with Prime Minister Sharon, if you don't mind. We've grown close, and one of the reasons why is I appreciate a person who when he says something, means it. And I hope he appreciates that about me. In other words, I said early on, we're going to join in fighting terror so that Israel could be secure and America secure and other free nations secure.

Secondly—and I have—and he knows I keep my word, and I know he keeps his word. Secondly, what I appreciate is somebody who thinks boldly for peace. And Ariel Sharon came to the White House and said, "We're going to disengage from the Gaza." And I was struck by what a bold

decision that was. And the disengagement is, I think, a part of making Israel more secure and peaceful, and I agree with the Prime Minister.

It's important because the United States is a strong ally of Israel and, therefore, if you're a strong ally, you want there to be peace for your ally.

Mr. Deckel. You know, the main concern of Israel is that the disengagement might lead not to more security but, on the contrary, to more violence. Do you understand the concerns?

The President. Oh, absolutely, I understand. And I can understand why people think this decision is one that will create a vacuum into which terrorism will flow. I happen to disagree. I think this will create an opportunity for democracy to emerge, and democracies are peaceful. And therefore, it's very important for the United States, as an active participant in this process, to encourage the formation of security forces that will defeat terror, just like the roadmap calls for—these are Palestinian security forces—and to encourage the Palestinians to develop a peaceful state.

The Negev and Galilee

Mr. Deckel. You had announced that you will support the disengagement by some aid the administration will provide Israel to develop the northern and southern—the Galilee and the Negev.

The President. Right.

Mr. Deckel. Has any decision been made regarding this issue?

The President. Well, first of all, I did say when the Prime Minister was here that the Negev and Galilee present great opportunities for economic development. And we understand that. So I'm going to send teams over to assess the opportunities available for the United States to help Israel, and they'll report back to me. But we have made no focus yet on specific budget items.

Likud Party/Binyamin Netanyahu

Mr. Deckel. Mr. President, are you troubled by the fierce opposition Prime Minister Sharon, your partner, is facing in his own camp, in the Likud Party? According to the polls, he might lose because of the disengagement.

The President. First of all, on democracy there's going to be dissent. And secondly, the Prime Minister has made a very strong, bold decision. And I can understand why people are debating the issue. But I'm confident he's made the right decision. And I can also assure the Israeli people the decision he made has brought the United States and Israel even closer together.

Mr. Deckel. Have you any opinion about Mr. Netanyahu, who stands to succeed him and now is leading the opposition?

The President. Well, I met Bibi Netanyahu. Of course, he's well known in the United States. He's going to make the decision he thinks is necessary for Israel's good, and there's just a disagreement between two friends. But I believe the decision that Prime Minister Sharon has made and is going to follow through on will be good for Israel.

Mr. Deckel. And why are you so sure it's going to lead to more security?

The President. Well, it's an opportunity—first of all, the previous system wasn't working. I mean, there was an intifada; there was death; there was killing. And if you notice, there's been a calm in attacks. One attack is too many, but there's been fewer

attacks. And I think in the long run, two states living side by side in peace is the ultimate solution for Israeli's security.

In the meantime, we've got to work to dismantle terrorist organizations, and that's precisely what the roadmap calls for.

President Abbas

Mr. Deckel. How urgent is it that Mr. Abbas take more actions against terrorism? How urgent is it? Because you said that it's not enough, what they have done so far.

The President. Well, I think—and I've told that to the Prime Minister Abbas—or President Abbas. He's a strong—he strongly understands the need to dismantle terrorists. He knows that a democracy can't exist so long as you've got armed groups willing to take law in their own hands, and he's committed to a democratic state. And we've got work to do with him, and that's why we've got a general on the ground there that's helping to try train and coordinate Palestinian forces to fight off the terrorists who would want to stop the process for peace.

Hamas

Mr. Deckel. But would you accept a permanent ceasefire with the Hamas movement, for instance?

The President. Well, you know, Hamas is on the terrorist group.

Mr. Deckel. He made a ceasefire with them.

The President. Well, he's elected by the Palestinians. I am not. On the other hand, I can express my opinions to him, which I have. And I don't believe you can have a peaceful, democratic state with armed groups willing to take the law in their own hands.

Mr. Deckel. As a believer, Mr. President, what do you say to Jewish believers who think that God sent them to settle in the biblical Israel, and they will not obey any decision of elected government?

The President. Well, you know, there are admonitions in the Bible that does talk about the role of government relative to man. And Israel is a democracy, and democracies are able to express the will of the people. The Prime Minister is expressing what he thinks is in the best interests of Israel, and the people will decide, ultimately, whether or not that decision makes sense.

Mr. Deckel. You know, things in the Middle East constantly change. And nobody predicted the U.S. will start dialog with the PLO in the eighties, and then Prime Minister—late Prime Minister Rabin signing an accord with Yasser Arafat. Do you see any similar development with the Hamas in the future?

The President. Here's what I see. I see relations with a peaceful Palestinian state that is run by—that is founded on democratic institutions. That's what I believe can happen and should happen. I mean, in order to ultimately defeat terror, whether it be in Palestinian territories or Iraq or Iran, there must be open, transparent societies based upon rule of law.

Palestinian Control of Gaza

Mr. Deckel. Your timeframe was a Palestinian state in 2005. Would you like to update the timeframe, Mr. President?

The President. I think Israel—the people of Israel must understand that now is an opportunity for the Palestinians to show leadership and self-government in Gaza. And that's why my focus is intensely upon Gaza. We hope that the disengagement goes well. And we understand that once Israel has withdrawn, it's now up to the Palestinians to show the world that they can self-govern in a peaceful way.

Mr. Deckel. You said that once the disengagement is carried out, both sides will help together to the roadmap to meet their obligations. And Prime Minister Sharon vowed that there will be no political progress until the Palestinians will act

forcefully against terrorism. Do you share this view with him?

The President. Here's the way I view it. One, I think that the roadmap does call for dismantling terrorist organizations. And secondly, I think—I know that the disengagement from Gaza presents an opportunity for a Palestinian state which is peaceful to begin to grow. In other words, it goes to show that—that there's a chance to show the Israelis and the Palestinians that there's a better life ahead. And in order to do that in Gaza—in Gaza—

Obligations of Middle East Participants

Mr. Deckel. So the burden is upon the Palestinians once the disengagement is over?

The President. I think the burden is on—everybody has got obligations. You know, obviously, the peaceful withdrawal by Israelis from the Gaza is part of the burden. The terrorists—dismantling terrorist organizations is part of the burden. I think the—

Mr. Deckel. Should it be the first—the first step before anything other happens?

The President. Gaza?

Mr. Deckel. The dismantling of the terrorist organizations?

The President. Well, I think that's a part of a process. You see, dismantling a terrorist organization is not only taking arms and isolating terrorists, but it's also showing the Palestinians and the Israelis that a peaceful state can emerge. This is what the opportunity is. And that's why I think that Prime Minister Sharon's decision was so bold.

But we have a—let me finish the obligations. Israelis have obligations. The Palestinians have obligations. The United States has an obligation. That's why Mr. Wolfensohn and our general on the ground is there, to help establish the institutions necessary for a peaceful state to emerge. Arab nations have got obligations now: one, to not incite violence; two, to help isolate and bring to justice terrorists; and three,

to provide funds to help these—the Gaza to become a place of prosperity and peace.

Iran

Mr. Deckel. You mentioned Iran, and I wonder, Mr. President, how imminently is the Iranian threat? There was a release lately of the U.S. intelligence that they won't have any capability in the next 10 years. Is this your latest information, Mr. President?

The President. My latest information is that the Iranians refuse to comply with the demands of the free world, which is: Do not in any way, shape, or form have a program that could yield to a nuclear weapon. And the United States and Israel are united in our objective to make sure that Iran does not have a weapon. And in this particular instance, the EU-3, Britain, France, and Germany, have taken the lead, been helping to send the message, a unified message to the Iranians.

Look, in all these instances we want diplomacy to work. And so we're working feverishly on the diplomatic route. And you know, we'll see if we're successful or not. As you know, I'm—

Mr. Deckel. And if not?

The President. Well, all options are on the table.

Mr. Deckel. Including use of force?

The President. Well, you know, as I say, all options are on the table. The use of force is the last option for any President. You know, we've used force in the recent past to secure our country. It's a difficult—it's difficult for the Commander in Chief to put kids in harm's way. Nevertheless, I have been willing to do so as a last resort in order to secure the country and to provide the opportunity for people to live in free societies.

Iraq

Mr. Deckel. I won't be finishing this interview without asking you about your decision in Iraq. Knowing what you know

today, you made the right decision, Mr. President?

The President. Yes. I did. The world is safer without Saddam Hussein in power.

Mr. Deckel. Is it?

The President. Yes. Absolutely. Saddam Hussein—you know, we made the decision on a lot of factors. One factor, of course, is that the world thought he had weapons of mass destruction, not just the United States but the entire world. I went to the United Nations. The United Nations unanimously passed a resolution that said to Saddam Hussein, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." Once again, he defied the world.

But we also made the case that Saddam Hussein had terrorist ties. Abu Nidal was in Iraq. Zarqawi, the man who's inflicting so much murder and chaos on innocent Iraqis, was in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was an enemy of the United States, enemy of a lot of countries. And there's no doubt in my mind that we're safer as a result of him not being in power. And there's no doubt in my mind that a democratic Iraq will be a part of a change in the broader Middle East that will lay the foundations for peace.

You know, a lot of the world says, "Well, unless you are a certain type of person, you can't live in a free society." I strongly disagree with that. I believe that embedded into everybody's soul is the desire to live in freedom. That's what I believe, that there is an Almighty, and the Almighty plants a sense of being free. Therefore, if given a chance, people will live in a free society, and free societies are peaceful societies.

President's Visit to Israel

Mr. Deckel. Any plans to visit in the State of Israel? I know you were there as a Governor of Texas.

The President. I was. [Laughter]

Mr. Deckel. What mostly impressed you in the Holy Land?

The President. Well, first of all, I'll never forget waking up in the hotel and seeing this golden shine on the Old City. It was just—and I remember waking up Laura. I said, "Laura, you're not going to believe—you're not going to believe this fantastic sight."

The other thing, of course, that sticks in my mind was the helicopter tour I took of the West Bank, and my guide was Ariel Sharon. It was one of the great ironies of all time. I was a Governor; he was in the Cabinet. And he said, "Would you like to take a helicopter ride?" to me. Governor Cellucci, who went on to be the Ambassador to Canada, and Governor Leavitt, who is now in my Cabinet, and Governor Racicot, the four of us, we said, "Sure," and we got in the chopper, and the tour guide was Ariel Sharon as we choppered all throughout the West Bank.

Mr. Deckel. Will you visit again?

The President. I'd love to visit again sometime.

Mr. Deckel. In your term?

The President. I hope so. And I hope to visit and proclaim success as a result

of a bold decision that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has made, and I think I'll be able to do that.

Mr. Deckel. Mr. President, I do thank you very much for this interview and for your time.

The President. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 7:17 a.m. at the Bush Ranch for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; James D. Wolfensohn, Quartet Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement; Lt. Gen. William E. Ward, USA, Senior U.S. Security Coordinator, Department of State; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal, who was found dead in Baghdad, Iraq, on August 19, 2002; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zargawi. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 12. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

The President's Radio Address August 13, 2005

Good morning. This week I met in Texas with Secretary of State Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the rest of my senior foreign and defense policy advisers. We discussed recent events in Iraq, including the political progress that is taking place in that country. Despite the acts of violence by the enemies of freedom, Iraq's elected leaders are now finishing work on a democratic constitution. Later this year, that constitution will be put before the Iraqi people for their approval.

The establishment of a democratic constitution is a critical step on the path to Iraqi self-reliance. Iraqis are taking control

of their country, building a free nation that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself. And we're helping Iraqis succeed. We're hunting down the terrorists and training the security forces of a free Iraq so Iraqis can defend their own country. Our approach can be summed up this way: As Iraqis stand up, we will stand down. And when that mission of defeating the terrorists in Iraq is complete, our troops will come home to a proud and grateful nation.

The recent violence in Iraq is a grim reminder of the brutal nature of the enemy we face in the war on terror. Our mission